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## Review of The Unknown Garden of Another's Heart: The Surprising Friendship between C. S. Lewis and Arthur Greeves

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Lives and legacies such as Lewis's and Christopher Mitchell's remind us, who too frequently languish in Holy Saturday, that they are already a day ahead. Through Christ, Easter dawn approaches, and this collection by editor Bruce Johnson is a beautiful and valuable homage to that shared hope.

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Joseph A. Kohm Jr., *The Unknown Garden of Another's Heart: The Surprising Friendship between C. S. Lewis and Arthur Greeves* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022). 114 pages. \$21.00. ISBN 9781666710403.

At slightly over a hundred pages and written in accessible language, Joseph Kohm Jr.'s *The Unknown Garden of Another's Heart: The Surprising Friendship between C. S. Lewis and Arthur Greeves* (2022) can easily be read in one sitting or two. The title is beautiful and suggestive of an image from Lewis's poem "To the Memory of Arthur Greeves" (1917)—which speaks of "Roaming—without a name—without a chart— / The unknown garden of another's heart."

The friendship between C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) and Arthur Greeves (1895–1966) is "surprising" because it lasted nearly fifty years and because Lewis was an intellectual who rose to international fame, while Greeves lived a more ordinary and seemingly unaccomplished life. And yet, as the author suggests (persuasively, I think), "it was Arthur Greeves—not Owen Barfield, not J.R.R. Tolkien, and not even Lewis's brother Warnie—who was C. S. Lewis's best friend" (3). All the hallmarks of deep friendship are there: common interests, honesty, vulnerability, and affection. In his nearly three hundred letters to Arthur, whom Lewis calls his "first friend," we find a Lewis who reveals his innermost thoughts and secrets. "You are my only real Father Confessor," he tells Greeves.<sup>1</sup> "I never pass a day without remembering you."<sup>2</sup> *The Unknown Garden of Another's Heart* will help

<sup>1</sup> Letter of 3 April 1930, in C. S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. by Walter Hooper, 3 vols. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2004–7), 1:186.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of 25 May 1941, in Lewis, *CL*, 2:487–8.

correct the popular misconception of Lewis's approach to friendship as somehow impersonal, secretive, and even snobbish.<sup>3</sup>

The author has consulted all the relevant primary sources. The most important primary source is of course *They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves (1914–1963)* (1979) edited by Walter Hooper, which includes the nearly three hundred letters from Lewis to Arthur, all four surviving letters from Arthur to Lewis, Warnie's handful of letters to Arthur, and Hooper's indispensable *Introduction, Editor's Note* and numerous helpful footnotes and minibiographies. Also consulted are Arthur Greeves's unpublished diaries, Lewis's pre-conversion diary *All My Road Before Me*, his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, and several leading biographies of Lewis. The analytical yield of mining Arthur's diaries is surprisingly modest: a mere three paragraphs (7-8). Also, Lewis wrote long portraits of the Greeves family, and of Arthur Greeves in particular, that were published in *They Stand Together*. Walter Hooper proclaimed that these depictions were "perhaps as definitive a portrait as we are likely to come by."<sup>4</sup> It is a shame that Kohm refers to them so sparingly (6-7). They ought to have been reproduced in full. These missed opportunities point to the first of the work's major limitations.

The narrative is terribly one-sided. It reads more like a pastoral commentary on Lewis's life and faith than an original contribution to our understanding of Arthur Greeves or his "surprising friendship" with Lewis. We follow Lewis "in real time," reading page after page about things anyone who has ever read a biography of Lewis already knows all too well, occasionally dipping into his letters to Arthur. Chapter four ("First Friends") is almost entirely redundant: the first two-thirds chronicle Lewis's relationship with Mrs. Janie Moore and his friendships with Barfield, Cecil Harwood, Nevill Coghill, and Tolkien. Only a few letters survive from the long period covered in chapters six ("Homeliness") and seven ("A New Gap"); this is compensated by lengthy introductions of Lewis's other friends Alan Griffiths, Charles Williams, Sister Penelope, Dorothy Sayers, Ruth Pitter, and Joy Davidman. Chapter eight ("The Sword of Damocles")

<sup>3</sup> See Jason Lepojärvi, "Misreading C. S. Lewis on Friendship: The Charges of Sexism, Secrecy, and Snobbery," in *Theology Today* (forthcoming 2023).

<sup>4</sup> Walter Hooper, ed., *They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves (1914–1963)* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1979), 24.

recounts the three deaths of Mrs. Moore, Joy, and Lewis. Ironically, the only death *not* covered in every biography of Lewis—namely, Arthur’s—is completely forgotten.<sup>5</sup>

The author may have been overly optimistic in his belief that “we are able to reconstruct much of the content and subject matter . . . from Lewis’s letter’s alone” because he “habitually restated pertinent information from the last letter he received from the sender” (5). This device, or the author’s exploration of these letters, allows us to gauge the “plot” of their friendship—what was discussed, what happened and when—but not so easily the “man.” Who *was* Arthur Greeves? The garden of Arthur’s heart remains largely unknown. His possible homosexuality is discussed almost on the very last page which is odd, especially given that “sexual proclivities” were discussed at length in chapter two and hinted at in chapter four’s aside about Arthur’s “nature” and “desires” (21-5, 47).

The second limitation pertains to the elusive target audience, and the work seems strangely mistargeted. If the audience is Christian (and probably Protestant Christian given the many pastoral exhortations and scriptural references), why explain basic Christian doctrines? If the audience is North American, of which “almost half of all Americans sometimes or always feel lonely” (113), why assume that they would catch the meaning of “Lewis’s Boswell”? (35). Above all, if it is written for fans of Lewis, why tediously recount well known facts about his life and thought? Given that we already have Lewis’s letters, diary, autobiography, and good biographies, Hooper took a different approach in *They Stand Together*: “It is not, I feel, necessary to give here many of the generally known facts of C. S. Lewis’s life.”<sup>6</sup> This book would have benefitted from Hooper’s example.

Hooper declares: “The question [of who Arthur Greeves was] may never be answered satisfactorily until, and if, a biography of Greeves is attempted.”<sup>7</sup> For the time being, *They Stand Together* remains the closest thing to a “biography” of Lewis’s “first friend.” For readers who either cannot find a copy of *They Stand Together* or roam through its five hundred pages, *The Unknown Garden of Another’s Heart* is the only available alternative.

<sup>5</sup> It is beautifully recounted in Hooper’s introduction to *They Stand Together*, 37–8.

<sup>6</sup> Hooper, *They Stand Together*, 13

<sup>7</sup> Hooper, *They Stand Together*, 12.

Perhaps it will encourage readers to proceed to primary sources and inspire scholars to compose a biography of Arthur Greeves.

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Louis Markos, *C. S. Lewis for Beginners*, illus. by Joe Lee (Danbury, CT: For Beginners, 2022). viii + 192 pages. \$15.95. ISBN: 97819399940806.

A nonfiction graphic book series, “For Beginners” is designed to introduce young adults to various writers, thinkers, and subjects in a straightforward and accessible manner. Originally, its target audience was disadvantaged or struggling readers; its aim is to help them delve into complex topics with the hope of converting those near non-readers into readers. More recent additions to the series have focused on such writers as James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Toni Morrison, Ayn Rand, and J. R. R. Tolkien. *C. S. Lewis for Beginners* is the latest addition to this growing collection.

After a brief biography of Lewis in the first chapter, Louis Markos moves chronologically through the writings of C. S. Lewis, devoting one chapter each to exploring his various books. As Markos explains in the introduction, this pattern is broken in chapter three where four of his books on literary criticism are discussed in a single chapter: *The Allegory of Love*, *The Personal Heresy*, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, and *Studies in Words*. Although “brilliant,” these four “are a bit technical for the average reader” (6). Markos does not devote individual chapters to the essays, poems, or letters written by Lewis but draws upon all these while commenting on his other books.

Chapters two through twenty-eight each begin with a series of bullet points to help orient readers to the particular work or works being discussed. Through this staccato method, Markos not only explains the basic facts about each book, but also summarizes a surprising amount of scholarly discussion. For example, while examining *The Great Divorce*, Markos explains, “Lewis condenses the full weight of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* into the space of 100 pages. His guide, George MacDonald, combines Dante’s